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ABSTRACT

Five card games for use in beginning to advanced level Chinese language classrooms or outside the classroom are described. The games require a flat playing surface, the prescribed deck of cards, and three to five students. Instructor supervision is minimal for all but one of the games, and all provide healthy competition and fun with a purpose. (MSE)

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CARD GAMES FOR LEARNING CHINESE

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Among the many essentials in the language classroom, the introduction of the elements of healthy competition and fun with a purpose must not be neglected. The following five card games can serve to help satisfy those needs. All of them can be introduced at an early point in the elementary level Chinese class, and can be used well into the intermediate and even advanced level courses. Their time and place of usage is virtually unlimited. One only needs a large flat playing surface, the prescribed card deck, a minimum of three to five willing student bodies, and the game is on. They are suitable for usage both within and without the language classroom, and in fact can serve quite well as party games. Instructor supervision necessary for all but one of the games is minimal, as players will instinctively police each other on mistakes.

We hope that these card games may prove of assistance to our fellow Chinese language teachers, as well as inspiring them to devise a pūkè game or two of their own.

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GAMES FOR LEARNING CHINESE

Game Number: 1

Name of game: Pulling the Blankets

Skill(s) Addressed: Listening, Speaking, Reading

Suggested Level of Usage: Elementary

Group Size: 3-5

Equipment Needed:

This game requires the use of either a standard deck of poker playing cards (Jack=11, Queen=12 and King=13), or a specially-constructed set of forty 3x5 index cards--consisting of four identical sets of ten cards with the Chinese characters 1 to 10 written on them, one number on each card. You may increase the number of the sets if you wish to have more than four sets of the 10 numbers in the deck. Also, if you want to let your students practice numbers up to 20 you can simply put 20 cards in each set to accommodate the numbers 1 to 20.

Directions:

(1) Each player is dealt an equal number of cards. The cards are to be stacked up in front of each player face down so that no one, including the player, is able to see what the cards are.

(2) Play may begin with any player, but whoever begins does so by saying yī (one) as s/he picks up the top card from the pile of cards in front of her/him, turns it over and puts it in the middle of the table (or the game area). If the card played happens to be an ace (ace stands for one), or the Chinese character yī (if using the special deck), all the players must try to cover up the card with their hands, including the the player who laid out the card. The last person to do so is the loser and s/he will take in the card and lay it aside.

(3) If the first card was not an ace or yī, players continue to lay cards and "count off" until such time as the number of the card played and called out coincide (e.g., a player says shí while laying down a ten). As previously stated, the last player to put her/his hand over the card will be the loser. The loser is to take in all the cards played thus far. The more cards one takes, the bigger a loser one is.

(4) Every time a card played coincides with the number called there will be a loser who takes the card(s) played. After the cards are taken, the game resumes starting from the person who is next to the

player who played the last card. The numerical "counting off" process may continue from the last number called or begin from "one" once again.

(5) Play continues until all the cards have been played If the students complete the entire string of coincidental numbers (i.e., one through thirteen for those using the poker deck, one through ten or twenty for those using the special deck) without any number said and card played coinciding, they must start at "one" again, continuing until all the cards have been played.

(6) When the game is over, each player counts the cards which s/he has taken. The person who has the least cards is the winner of that game.

GAMES FOR LEARNING CHINESE

Game Number: 2

Name of Game: Asking for Cards

Skill(s) Addressed: Reading, Listening, Speaking

Suggested Level of Usage: Elementary

Group Size: 2-5

Equipment Needed: Same as Game 1

Directions:

(1) Each player is dealt an equal number of cards, which s/he keeps hidden from her/his opponents.

(2) Play may begin with any player. Whoever begins play must either lay down a pair of cards matching in number, or ask any of his opponents for one card which will enable her/him to form a pair. The player must ask using Chinese (e.g., Qǐng wèn, nǐ yǒu méiyǒu (number desired)?).

(3) If the player questioned has no such card, s/he says Duìbuqǐ, wǒ méiyǒu (number desired), and play rotates to the next student.

(4) If the player questioned does have the card in question, the following dialogue is carried out:

Questioned: Wǒ yǒu (number desired).

Questioner: Qǐng nǐ gěi wǒ yìzhāng (number desired).

Questioned: Hǎo, wǒ gěi nǐ yìzhāng (number desired).

Questioner: Xièxie nǐ.

Questioned: Búxiè.

(5) If the questioner gets a pair, s/he may continue to ask for cards. Play continues until one player has gotten rid of all of her/his cards in the form of pairs.

(6) It may be of value to insure that students pay attention to pronunciation as a means of "protecting" their cards. Suppose a student asks: "Qǐng wèn, nǐ yǒu méi yǒu jiǔ (nine)?" (note tone on last word--the correct word for nine is jiǔ). Even if his opponent is holding a nine, that opponent is perfectly correct in replying, "Duìbuqǐ, wǒ méiyǒu jiǔ." This serves to not only heighten the

competitive spirit, but also impress upon the more careless students the need for accurate pronunciation.

GAMES FOR LEARNING CHINESE

Game Number: 3

Name of Game: Connecting the Dragons

Skill(s) Addressed: Reading, Speaking

Suggested Level of Usage: Elementary

Group Size: 3-7

Equipment(s) Needed: Forty to eighty 3x5 index cards and four color pens (red, black, green, and blue). Divide the index cards equally into four sets, and write the Chinese numbers 1 to 10 (or up to 20 depending on the number of cards in each set) on each of the cards in the four sets using the four different color pens. In other words, if there are forty cards, there should be four sets of 1 to 10 in four different colors. You may increase the number of the sets if you wish to have more than four colors in the deck. This can be easily done by adding another 10 or 20 3x5 index cards to the deck with numbers 1 to 10 (or up to 20) written on them using a different color. However, to insure that the game is easy to play and not too time-consuming, it is advised that you use no more than six colors and no more than 120 cards. The minimum requirements will be 40 cards and four colors.

Directions:

(1) Each player is dealt an equal number of cards. The cards should be dealt face down, and players should keep their cards hidden from opponents' view.

(2) The player holding the "five of black" (if using the minimum four sets of 10 cards with black being one of the four colors) or the middle number of any predetermined suit (e.g., red 7 if each set has 13 cards and the predetermined color is red, green 10 if each set has 20 cards and the predetermined color is green) commences play by laying his/her card face up. S/he must also say the number of that card in Chinese as s/he does.

(3) If the first player laid a black 5, the next player has one of three choices, namely: (1) to lay a black 6; (2) to lay a black 4; (3) to lay a 5 of some other suit. Similarly, if, for example, play involves 15-card suits with the game-starting set determined to be blue, the initially-laid blue 8 may be followed by : (1) a blue 9; (2) a blue 7; or (3) an 8 of some other suit. Whatever the number or color of suits, if a player cannot continue the numerial sequence in the suit showing or start a new suit row s/he must discard one card face down in his/her personal discard pile. This should preferably be a low card numerically, for reasons to be explained later.

(4) Play continues in a similar pattern. That is, one must either "follow suit", continuing the sequence of numbers in any of the suits showing, or start a new row (using a five with the minimum deck of 40 cards, or the "middle number" with decks having more than 40 cards). If the player can neither follow suit nor start a new row, s/he must discard one card into her/his pile.

(5) At the end of the game, the numbers on the cards discarded are added up. The higher the number one gets, the bigger a loser one is. In other words, to win the game, one should try not to discard any cards, if possible. If one has to discard cards, one should discard lower number cards first--unless one wishes to "hurt" others. See explanations below.

(6) As the game progresses, a series of four "dragons" should begin to fill the table, as pictured below:

Black 7		Red 7	
Black 6	Green 6	Red 6	
Black 5	Green 5	Red 5	Blue 5
Black 4	Green 4		Blue 4
	Green 3		Blue 3
			Blue 2

(7) One elementary of strategy is to "hurt" other players by discarding a crucial card. Say a competitor facing the above playing surface has only three cards left (Black 2, Green 8 and Blue 7), and holds none of the cards with which s/he could continue the game (Black 8, Black 3, Green 7, Green 2, Red 8, Red 4, Blue 6 and Blue 1). The player has to discard one of the three cards in her/his hand. Normally, Black 2 will be the right card to be discarded, because it is a low number card. However, the player might want to discard Blue 7 to "hurt" his opponents. That is, since they are logically holding Black 8, 9 and 10, s/he can effectively block any possibility of their finishing the game without discarding any of those high cards. Of course, they can practice similar strategy on him.

(8) Play continues until all participants have laid down their cards, either as part of the "dragons" or in their respective discard piles. The winner is the one who has managed to put all of his/her cards into dragons (a long shot), or the one who has the lowest point total in her/his discard pile.

GAMES FOR LEARNING CHINESE

Game Number: 4

Name of Game: Sentence-stringing

Skill(s) Addressed: Writing (sentence generation)

Suggested Level of Usage: Elementary or higher

Group Size: 3-5

Equipment Needed: This game can be played with either teacher-prepared sets of 3x5 index cards (one character per card), covering all characters supposedly learned by the student, or by using student-prepared flashcard sets. There are advantages to both approaches. The former insures a uniformity of characters in terms of quality (with characters neatly and correctly written), although it forces the instructor to take the time to compile and keep "up to date" one set of cards for each student in the class. The latter provides a subtle impetus for the student to compile and continue to update his/her own set of learning aids, as those aids will also be of assistance in the competition described herein. We leave it to the teacher's discretion.

Directions:

(1) Each player is given (or provides) one set of character cards.

(2) The first player uses any one of her/his cards to start a sentence, pronouncing the word as s/he places it on the table.

(3) The object is simply to continue the sentence for as long as possible. If a student cannot add another character to the sentence, s/he is assessed a penalty point and must start a new sentence.

(4) Play continues until a designated limit (time or points), at which time the player with the lowest score wins.

(5) The instructor's role must be continual to insure not only that sentences created are grammatically correct, but also that there is not repetition of the same sentences over and over again.

Game Number: 5

Name of Game: Concentration

Skill(s) Addressed: Reading, Speaking

Suggested Level of Usage: Elementary or higher

Group Size: 3-7

Equipment Needed: Same as Game 4

Directions:

(1) The teacher selects fifteen (15) cards from one set, and finds the fifteen that match them from another set. S/he then places them face down in a 5 by 6 card grid, making sure they do not appear in any special order. The teacher, of course, can increase the number of cards for more advanced students. However, to insure that the game is manageable, no more than 60 cards should be used in any one game.

(2) The first student turns over one card, pronouncing the character s/he sees, and then repeats the process with a second card. If the student has found a matching pair and has pronounced the character correctly, s/he removes the pair and receives one point in her/his favor. If the two cards do not match. s/he turns them back over, and play rotates to the next student.

(3) Play continues until all the pairs have been removed. The player who accumulates the most points is the winner.

(4) While it is suggested that the character cards initially be set up in neat rows, as was the case in the television namesake of this game, one may lay out the cards in a more scrambled manner in order to increase the challenge as time goes on.